



**The Phoenix Family Readiness Group Newsletter**  
1<sup>st</sup> Special Troops Battalion, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (M)  
Operation Iraqi Freedom 05-07



**Issue 9 ~ 1-15 February 2006**

Hello Everyone! Yes, it's time once again for a brief update on how the battalion is doing and just what our soldiers are up to. This edition you'll hear about the Interrogators in Alpha Company, the Network Operations guys in Bravo and from the HHD First Sergeant. We'll also have a spotlight on one of the soldiers and a look at the latest local projects.

On behalf of the battalion leadership, I have to tell you that we couldn't be more proud of a group of Soldiers than we are of the Phoenix Battalion. Our Soldiers are learning new tasks, executing new jobs, and doing it better than anyone else thus far. Honestly, we are paving a new path as far as Special Troops Battalions are concerned. This week, we had a visit from General Maffey, the Assistant Division Commander for Maneuver, and he mirrored my comments.

As further evidence of our success, the battalion has submitted over 75 awards for our Soldiers, from Army Commendation Medals to Combat Action Badges. If you happen to be counting, as of this past week, we have officially been in Iraq for two whole months! It seems like the time is passing quickly, however still not quickly enough. Though the days are long and the work is exciting, we still think of you all daily and can't wait to be back with you again. Although you're not with us, your support, encouragement and caring definitely impact our lives daily. Thank you again for giving your time and energy to send mail and hold down the home front for us. We look forward to seeing you soon!



**Above: General Maffey in our Tactical Operations Center presenting a coin to PFC Nathan Schultz.**

**First Sergeant John Justis  
“Renegade 7”**

Greetings to all of you -- First Sergeant Justis here. First off I would just like to point out that I am not a writer in any way. I hope you can see your way clear of my elementary writing style.

As you know, MWR stands for Morale, Welfare and Recreation. To explain them a little, I will start my story with morale and how we keep it up. The other First Sergeants and I have spent most of our time supporting the fight, but when time permits taking care of our troops is what we do — with tons of help from the postal operations center and our mail clerks. The average time for a box is about ten days and letters are even a little quicker. We have secured several Iridium satellite phones for the sole purpose of calling home. These phones are available 24/7 at no cost to the soldier. There are also DSN phones in many locations and those troops can connect to the operator on Fort Hood for a quick local

connection. Many of you already know about our internet cafes; these were left behind by the unit before us. These are also open for business 24/7 so after a long day's patrol the soldiers can write home. The bonus is many patrols end in the early morning and with the difference in time our families might just be online.



**Above: Some of HHD's Soldiers enjoying their dayroom.**

Welfare is addressed on two fronts: Combat welfare and FOB (Forward Operating Base) welfare. To address combat welfare, the chain of command has acquired the latest body armor to outfit the troops on patrol. We also have all the up-armored vehicles we brought from Hood and several that we drew here in theater. We also continue to train our soldiers on the latest lessons learned on combating the ongoing insurgency.



**Above: Soldiers enjoying the Internet Café.**

Regarding the FOB environment welfare, we have been identifying all the possible health threats inherent to Iraq and our living

conditions. Weather will soon be an issue, but life in the pod area is easy. Every soldier has a heating/air conditioning control unit in the trailers - so at least their rest periods will be comfortable. Combat patrols and any outdoor activity in 120+ degrees can quickly become life threatening. Leaders at all levels are ensuring that enough water is on hand and will enforce hydration at all times. The First Sergeants are also concerned with cleanliness in the pod areas. Iraq is a dirty place - and without constant reminders our areas could also become hazardous. Regular leader checks on soldiers' quarters keep this in check. Germ management is encouraged at every possible location. Hand washing stations are at every dining facility entrance as well as in every latrine. Hand sanitizer is also available through the unit supply for those on the move. The medical team here in the STB is top-notch. Regular vaccinations are tracked and kept up to date. Sick call is conducted twice a day and trends are quickly identified and attacked with the appropriate counter measures.

As far as Recreation goes, well, fishing and hunting are kind of out of the question; after all, we are deployed. We have done a pretty good job establishing Company day rooms. When time is available soldiers can watch AFN (Armed Forces Network) or satellite TV. Big screen TVs are in each day room with DVD players and VCRs. There are several video game systems for those so inclined. There are three gyms here in Taji, all of which are open 24/7 and with the largest sitting right in the middle of the Battalion's area.

Overall, as you can see, the Soldiers are well set for living and working here. Conditions are great, but home will be better. Thanks for all your support.

*Renegade 7*

PHOENIX SPOTLIGHT

## ALPHA COMPANY INTERROGATORS

One of the most demanding and often scrutinized jobs performed by Alpha Company is that of our interrogators. As detainee operations constantly make international headlines, our highly professional men and women play a vital role in both our intelligence gathering process and the image of our nation.

The interrogators serve two primary functions. First and foremost, they question detainees to determine their intelligence value and how much information they know. Of course, this is not an easy process and may require several sessions to reach a final determination. Once completed, the interrogators analyze the information and write a detailed report submission to Brigade. These details are then incorporated into the big intelligence picture and evaluated throughout the Brigade.

A second duty they have, after evaluating the intelligence, is to recommend a detainee's release or transfer to the well known Abu Ghraib Detention Facility. This is based on evidence proving a detainee is either guilty or innocent of a suspected crime. Definite evidence of attacks against Coalition Forces means that the detainee is further processed. Criminal acts, however, are turned over to the Iraqi Police for prosecution. Of course, the release or transfer decision is ultimately held by the Brigade Commander, but he considers the review of our interrogators in his judgment process.

The Phoenix Battalion and the Alpha Company Commander are very proud of our soldiers' performance and their extreme dedication to duty. They are playing a vital role that is painting our intelligence picture and helping to provide a safer and more stable environment for Iraq.

And just for your information, we'd love to include a picture, but pictures of them are secret material and cannot be shared over an open source. Just look forward to meeting them in person upon our return!

## BRAVO COMPANY NETWORK OPERATIONS

In addition to Alpha Company's special soldiers, we'd also like to highlight "The AT&T of the Army" – Bravo Company's Network Operations Platoon.

Signal Soldiers divide their time between laying cable, (sometimes in very confined spaces), installing phones, putting up antennas, programming routers-switches, and repairing -- which may include screaming at or giving a "gentle" tap with a hammer to - our equipment. They also monitor and troubleshoot network problems as they arise.



**Above: Bravo Company Soldiers assembling a complex antennae system.**

After the initial set up of equipment is complete, their primary task is to monitor and troubleshoot the communication network and repair equipment which defines our "Quality of Service". The Network Operations cell monitors and plans the entire brigade and Taji network while the LOS and JNN teams are busy installing links and keeping the brigade connected.



Now that you know a little more of the specifics, just remember that the Network Operations Platoon keeps the email flowing. As long as they can, they'll continue soldiering on and keeping the lines of communication open.



**Above: Bravo laying cables in obscure places.**

## PHOENIX SPOTLIGHT

### PFC JASON HOSTETLER

If by some odd chance you guys back there in the States were able to step foot into the Phoenix Battalion Tactical Operations Center (TOC), the first thing you'd notice is about five 18-25 year old Soldiers working hard to make things happen. One of those Soldiers, a top notch Soldier, is PFC Jason Hostetler. Not only does he serve in the TOC, his primary duty is to serve as Command Sergeant Major Seaman's Gunner. No matter what he's doing on a given day, you can guarantee he's got a smile on his face and is eagerly executing his work.



**Above: PFC Jason Hostetler as the Gunner on a patrol with CSM Seaman.**

PFC Hostetler is originally from Dalton, Ohio, where his parents and his two younger siblings live now. He's a young 20 years old and has only been in the Army for less than a year. Jason said he joined the Army because he wanted to accomplish some career goals and set himself up for a job in the law enforcement field – not to mention to take in the \$20,000 bonus he got for joining! He also likes the idea of serving his country and being an infantryman.

PFC Hostetler's favorite quote is "Live life to the fullest," and right now - he's doing just that and a little more. We're proud to have him on the Phoenix team and hope you'll get to meet him for yourself.

## LOCAL PROJECTS

As you're probably aware, part of our mission here is to make friends with the local population and gain their trust in order to strengthen their loyalty to the Iraqi Army. In doing this, we cover down on local projects that need fixing. Just recently, our Physician's Assistant, CPT Powell identified a need for a refrigerator in one of the local clinics. Though it may seem small to us, providing a refrigerator for this clinic was a big deal among the locals.



**Above: CPT Powell and several of the locals at the Al Pachichi Clinic.**

The locals were very thankful and glad that they'd be able to serve the people again with medical services not otherwise provided without the refrigerator. It's a small effort on our part, but a big return in gaining their trust. Obviously we can't do these types of things all the time, but the chances we get to are a great experience.



**Above: Soldiers unloading the refrigerator.**

## PHOENIX 6

Greetings and hello again from Taji. It has been a busy month so far in February but the battalion is settling into a good combat rhythm. We are now receiving new Soldiers from the battalion's Rear Detachment and are welcoming them on board quickly here in Iraq. We take great care to integrate them into our operations and get them up to speed before they assume duties. Just because you deploy does not

mean you stop training. We have a training plan that begins immediately upon arrival and continues until they are combat ready.

We are also getting Soldiers out on mid tour leave already! All Soldiers will be afforded the opportunity to take leave. I personally check who is going on leave each week and make sure that each of our companies has a plan to allow everyone to take leave.

Finally, as the S1 noted in her opening comments, we are submitting soldiers for awards and rewarding them for excellence. We will also have a 4ID Patch Ceremony on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February where everyone in the battalion will receive the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Patch to wear on their right sleeves.

## Phoenix 6



**Above: SSG Richard Rodriguez making friends with the children on one of his patrols.**



## To Dare Is To Do

Larry A. Seaman  
Command Sergeant Major  
U.S. Army

John W. Cross  
LTC, EN  
Commanding

